

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA San Diego, California

***United States Attorney
Karen P. Hewitt***

For Further Information, Contact: Assistant U. S. Attorney Todd W. Robinson (619) 557-7034

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - March 20, 2008

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced today that United States District Court Judge Dana M. Sabraw sentenced seven defendants convicted of participating in a Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organization (RICO) conspiracy involving the Mexican Mafia, aka "La Eme," prison/street gang, to sentences of life imprisonment. There is no parole in the federal system. In sentencing each of the defendants, Judge Sabraw repeatedly remarked that he could think of no more serious crime than that committed by the defendants.

The seven defendants sentenced today were convicted in federal court on January 4, 2008, following a jury trial which began on October 15, 2007. During trial, the Government presented evidence of numerous racketeering acts committed by the defendants, including: murder, conspiracy to commit murder, conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, distribution of controlled substances, conspiracy to interfere with commerce through threats of violence, and conspiracy to launder drug proceeds.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Todd Robinson, one of the prosecutors on the case, the RICO conspiracy charge of which the defendants were convicted stemmed from a long-term investigation conducted by the multi-agency San Diego Violent Crimes Task Force-Gang Group and North County Regional Gang Task Force, which targeted the criminal activities of Hispanic street gangs with ties to the Mexican Mafia, or “La Eme.”

United States Attorney Karen Hewitt said, “The Mexican Mafia is a criminal organization that has operated for years in Southern California and has been a poison to our community. The members and associates of the Mexican Mafia have committed countless crimes of violence and engaged in widespread illegal drug activities. This case was a first for the United States Attorney’s Office in San Diego, because we used the federal RICO conspiracy statute to attack members of the upper echelon of the Mexican Mafia. After a trial of more than two months, the jury returned guilty verdicts against each of the seven defendants. Today each defendant received a sentence which appropriately reflects the egregiousness of his criminal conduct - - life in federal prison.”

United States Attorney Karen Hewitt stated that this prosecution would not have occurred without the outstanding work by all members of the Violent Crimes Task Force Gang Group led by the FBI San Diego Field Office.

DEFENDANTS

Case Number: 06cr1243-DMS

Ricardo Martinez

Eduardo Gonzalez-Gallegos

George Fernandez

Thomas Durkin

Richard Valenzuela

Cesar Abarca

Joshua Cruz

SUMMARY OF CHARGE

United States v. Raul Leon, et. al. (Case Number 06cr1243-DMS)

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1962(d) - Conspiracy to Conduct Enterprise Affairs
Through a Pattern of Racketeering Activity

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
San Diego Police Department
San Diego Sheriff's Office
North County Regional Gang Task Force
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Carlsbad Police Department
Escondido Police Department
U.S. Bureau of Prisons
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
Naval Criminal Investigative Service
Oceanside Police Department
Drug Enforcement Administration - Los Angeles and Riverside
Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement - Los Angeles and Riverside
U.S. Marshals Service
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives